

VIA WIRELESS

Novelized by Thompson Buchanan From the Successful Play of the Same Name
By WINCHELL SMITH, FREDERIC THOMPSON and PAUL ARMSTRONG

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(Continued.)

"Suppose you and Edward go around by ship and let me come through the other way. I think that would be a splendid plan."

"Mrs. Durant looked at her daughter, and said:

"Frances, I think you must be out of your head!" she exclaimed. "How could you come through alone? Probably you are planning to have Lieutenant Sommers take charge of you?"

"Frances" expression showed only amazement, but her heart was beating hard.

"Lieutenant Sommers?" she asked, with well simulated surprise.

"Mrs. Durant made an impatient gesture.

"Now, don't pretend, Frances, that you are ignorant of the fact that the Roanoke is expected here in the harbor, and he is on board."

"Is he?" said Frances, still seeming surprised. "Why, how nice that would be!"

"Nonsense!" snapped her mother. "Frances, I don't care for that young naval officer, and I don't see why you can't get him out of your head."

The girl's face flushed hotly.

"He isn't in my head!" she exclaimed. "My mother was not to be put off so easily."

"Humph! Maybe he isn't in your head, but sometimes I've feared he is in your heart, which is worse. Now, Frances, don't be foolish. You know Edward cares for you, and you know that your father and I would like to see you two married."

The girl shook her head decisively, and her tone was very firm when she answered.

"I'm very sorry, mother, to disappoint you and dad, but I must tell you once and for all I wouldn't marry Edward Pinckney if he were the only man on earth."

The mother looked at her daughter, amazed.

"Frances Durant, I'm ashamed of you!" she cried. "Here you've had me enduring that horrid yacht for a month past merely because I thought it would help to bring this match about, and now you tell me you'll never marry him! I've never been so treated in my life!"

"Frances could not help laughing. She slipped her arm about her mother's neck affectionately.

"I'm awfully sorry, mother, dear, but I don't see how I can help you. You wouldn't have me marry a man I don't love, would you?"

"No," agreed her mother uncertainly. "I don't want to force you."

"Then I expect it's settled," decided the girl, with a long breath of satisfaction. "We won't say any more about it."

Mrs. Durant knew Frances well enough not to try to argue the matter. She still had some hope, for she had dwelt on the prospect so long that she could not at once give it up entirely. One change of scene had failed to work. She would try another.

"Well, then, for goodness' sake, Frances, let's go home," she said eagerly. "I want to get settled in my own room and feel the floor stay still."

The girl sighed.

"Very well, mother; we'll go home whenever you wish," she agreed.

Down in the courtyard of the old fashioned Spanish hotel Pinckney was talking to the captain of the Irvesa anxiously.

"You say the Roanoke is in?" he asked.

The captain nodded.

"Yes, sir. She cast anchor in the harbor an hour ago," he declared.

"Then get up steam at once, captain," ordered Pinckney. "We will leave tonight."

The officer from the yacht hesitated.

"Of course, if you say so, sir," he agreed, "but I would strongly suggest waiting over a bit. There is a bad storm brewing, and storms in this latitude are apt to be awkward. Don't you think you'd better lay over until the weather clears up?"

Pinckney whirled on him angrily.

"I'm giving the orders," he snapped. "Still the seaman could not quite agree. He knew his business, and he felt a grave responsibility at the thought of taking the wife and daughter of the owner into danger."

"Certainly, sir, I'm under your orders," he said, "but we have the ladies on board, and they might not like a storm."

"Nonsense," snapped Pinckney. "You're too cautious. We leave to-night and dine on board. Get up steam at once."

The captain saluted.

"Certainly, sir," he said. "The responsibility is up to you."

Mrs. Durant and Frances came down into the courtyard a few minutes later, just as Pinckney was reading a cable that a messenger boy had handed to him.

"Bad news?" asked Mrs. Durant anxiously.

Pinckney looked up.

"Only that I must return at once," he said.

"What's wrong?" asked the other two together.

The man smiled at their alarm.

"Nothing very wrong," he said. "In fact, this cable brings good news. The government has notified us to go ahead on the Rhinestrom gun order."

"Then the Sommers gun, of which you were afraid?" suggested Mrs. Durant.

Pinckney looked at her in his most superior manner.

"We were never afraid of the Sommers gun," he said. "It was only his influence in Washington."

It was Frances' turn to flush angrily.

"There was no reason to be afraid of that," she declared, as haughtily as though her own father's honor had been impugned. "Lieutenant Som-

mers would scarcely do any honorable."

The man shrugged his shoulders. He could not, even though it were policy, suppress his hatred of Sommers.

"I'm glad you think so," he sneered. "I don't think; I know," retorted the girl haughtily.

Pinckney smiled with triumph.

"Well, it makes no difference now, anyway," he said. "We get the order for the Rhinestrom gun because the Sommers gun has proved a failure."

Frances' face grew suddenly white as she turned away quickly. The Sommers gun a failure! What a blow it must be to him! Probably he didn't know it yet. How she would like to comfort him, and she could not! He would not listen to her. If she only could see him now! She was still engrossed with her own thoughts that she scarcely heard Pinckney's question:

"Can you leave tonight?"

"I think so, easily," agreed Mrs. Durant. "What do you say, Frances?"

The girl turned wearily. After all, what difference did it make? She would not get a chance to see Sommers. His ship might not arrive for a week more. And, if she did see him, what could she say? It was all no use. She might as well agree to what they wanted. Why struggle longer? So she nodded indifferently.

"All right; I'll go whenever you wish."

Pinckney smiled his triumph, and Mrs. Durant beamed.

"I'll hurry right upstairs and pack," she said. "We can leave in an hour."

When Pinckney and her mother had gone Frances sat down at a table by herself to think. She was so lonely, and everything was so hopeless! There was no chance of seeing Sommers, no chance of their ever coming together again.

And she loved him. She knew that now. The clutch at her heart when she heard of his misfortune made it very clear to her. It was no use to try to deceive herself any longer. She loved him. She wanted him, for he was the one man in all the world who could make her happy. Now she was miserable, and he was a failure.

"Pardon me, Miss Durant."

At the cool, penetrating voice Frances looked up. A big man with a shrewd face and clear, cold gray eyes that had the particular faculty of compelling and riveting attention stood beside the table with his hat in his hand.

"Can you tell me where I can find Mr. Pinckney?" he asked.

The man was so obviously not merely seeking to scrape an acquaintance that the girl had no hesitancy in replying.

"In the hotel, I think," she said coolly.

"You intend sailing almost immediately, do you not?" persisted the man.

The girl was surprised, but the questioner's manner was thoroughly respectful and yet seemed to demand a reply.

"I believe so—yes," she said and half turned away.

The questioner bowed.

"Thank you." He half turned to go, then stopped and, turning back, said coolly:

"By the way, it may interest you, Miss Durant, to know that the Roanoke anchored in the harbor an hour ago and that Lieutenant Sommers is expected at this hotel any minute."

Then, bowing coolly, he turned and walked off, leaving Frances staring after him in astonishment.

A slight noise back of her brought the girl to her senses. She looked up curiously.

CHAPTER XII.

A WIRELESS MESSAGE.

FRANCES and Sommers stared at each other, both at first unable to speak. Perhaps speech was unnecessary, for the face of each told plainly how much this chance meeting meant.

Of course it was the girl who recovered first. With an arch smile that was very close to tears of happiness she held out her hand.

"So you haven't quite forgotten me, have you? You do know my name! Won't you shake hands?"

The man came to her eagerly, seizing her hand and holding it with a grip that almost crushed it, while she looked at all the things that he could not just then say.

"I can hardly believe it's really you," he exclaimed. "It's so strange to find you away off here."

Frances' heart was pounding with great throbs of happiness. He loved her! That was plain, very plain. Every look, every gesture, showed it. And with the knowledge there came to the heart of the girl a great confidence, a content that made her able, woman-like, to hide all her feelings and make him work for everything that in reality already belonged to him.

"Oh, mother and I are on a cruise," she said lightly. "We've been here several days. We didn't have an idea that we should see you. What a lucky chance!"

No one from her manner could have guessed the weary days of waiting for that cruiser, now just arrived.

"Is your father with you?" asked Sommers.

The girl shook her head.

"No; father couldn't come. Mr. Pinckney is with us."

The naval officer's face hardened ever so little.

"Oh, yes, of course," he said, and, inside, his evident jealousy made the girl just that much happier.

To be continued.

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